

Also

# The Holy Ghost

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A ROODCROFT PAPER

Holy Cross Press

West Park, New York

5TH THOUSAND

## "Also the Holy Ghost"

**A**LSO the Holy Ghost, the Comforter." If you look on page ten of the American Episcopal Church's "*Book of Common Prayer*" you will see these words, so familiar to Episcopalians and many other Christians. They are a line from the ancient hymn called "*Te Deum laudamus*": "We praise Thee, O God." This glorious burst of praise to the Lord has twenty-nine lines in our usual English version, yet only this one is devoted to the Holy Ghost, the "Strengtheners." That's the old meaning of "Comforter"—not One Who makes us spiritually comfortable! It indicates why this "*Roodcroft Paper*" is written. Most Christians know very little about Him. And He is so neglected that even here—to put it reverently—He is a sort of "also ran." I often feel that, while Church people claim they believe in the Holy Trinity—Three Persons in the One and only God—in practice they act as if He were a Binity, or Two Persons. The Father and the Son are adored, served, and under-

stood to a considerable extent. But the Holy Spirit is forgotten, or referred to passingly without the emphasis He deserves to receive as God. We can't afford in this way to neglect God Himself.

## I.

**I**F we attempt some sort of mental picture of God the Holy Ghost we have a hard job on our hands, for He has no body. However, the Holy Scriptures provide us with symbols or likenesses of Him. One of the first and best of these is found at the opening of the Old Testament, the scene of creation. There we read: "and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (Genesis 1:2.) Like a dove He brooded or hovered over the mass of waters, and from them came forth new and higher types of life. So today, at the beginning of the newly-formed Christian life, whenever a baby or adult is baptized into Christ and His Church, the same Holy Spirit acts upon the infant Christian and produces an utterly new life-in-Christ in his or her soul. In the early Church what nowadays we call "Confirmation" was given right after Baptism. The evidence in the Bible dealing with the practice of our earliest Christian ancestors shows that such "laying-on-of-hands" by an Apostle or Bishop was the "sealing and anointing with the

Holy Spirit," as, for instance, in Ephesians 1:13. Baptism of the Spirit followed the Baptism of Water, the two together forming the Sacrament of Initiation into the Church, the mystical Body of Christ. "Water and the Spirit," from the world's creation to the re-birth of every Christian soul, are wonderful truths, never to be forgotten.

From these facts a couple of principles emerge for our guidance in Christ-like living and for understanding the Holy Spirit. Christian "initiation" is, at bottom, Water-Baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus our Lord. This action is followed by Spirit-Baptism: a "sealing unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30), which is called "Confirmation." After all, what *is* the beginning of Christianity in any one of us? It is "the laver (washing-vessel) of regeneration (new birth) and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3:5.) So Saint Paul put it, reminding us of the very start of our lives "in Christ." In Scripture the notion of "salvation" is dynamic—full of spiritual dynamite!—and not passive. A "*life*" it is, which can only be received and lived within the Spirit-filled Body or fellowship, the Church. Not simply is the Holy Spirit active in every activity of the Blessed Trinity (as we shall notice later), but the baptized child could not grow without Him. He is "infused," or



poured into us, at our Baptism or "washing," even though His final and full indwelling may be postponed to later years when we are Confirmed.

## II.

**N**OW let us realize the neglect of Him, and how we may begin to make up for this sadly serious situation in the life of the Church and the individual member of it. Any book on the Holy Spirit tells how He is neglected because He is misunderstood. For example, take the Christian belief about the Nature of God, that He is "Trinity," Three "Persons" in the One God. We must keep clearly in mind this fact. These Three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—are co-equal as well as co-eternal. They are equal to Each Other, and eternally the same. By this we understand that no One of Them is greater or less than the Other. "From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God" (Psalm 90:2) is to be proclaimed of Each of Them. Hence the Holy Ghost IS GOD, equally with the Father and the Son. In the last century, some of the Church of England clergy were being tried in court for breaking the laws of that land which applied to the Established Church, and were accused of grave misdemeanors, because among other things they wore special vestments for the Holy Eucharist.

One of the Privy Council Judges showed his ignorance at the "ritual" trial. An author living at the time said: "the matter became more serious when persons unacquainted with the rudiments of theology delivered opinions upon matters of faith; and even Lord Westbury . . . spoke of one of the 'Inferior Persons of the Trinity.'" No—the Holy Ghost is not "inferior" in the Most Holy Trinity, God Himself, though He continues to be treated thus, even by those who should know better. We cannot overstress this very great truth about Him. Consequences of the greatest importance flow from it, both in our thinking and our acting.

Any book on Him says so. There are still too few of them. Several years ago I looked up the number in our library at Holy Cross Monastery, West Park, New York. We had fifteen altogether, though today the number is larger.

Another reason we possess no adequate idea of Him is because even the Clergy sometimes slip, and refer to Him as "it." The Holy Ghost is no vaguely impersonal spiritual influence. Never say "it"—rather "He" or "Him." This is nothing new. Before a line of our present Gospels was written during the first century, Saint Paul wrote: "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." (Ephesians 4:30.) And you can't grieve an "it!" He is a Person,

personal. Since He is God, let us pray to Him devoutly and earnestly for the overcoming of this combined neglect and misunderstanding about Him. One reason people don't serve God as they should is due to this lack on our part.

One way to do this is to realize the nature and work of God the Holy Spirit as seen throughout the seasons of the Church Year, from Advent before Christmas through summer Trinity-tide. Naturally, we incline to think of Him only on Pentecost or Whitsunday and the eight days or "octave" afterwards, because that is His special festival season, covering the fifty days after Easter Day. Yet He should be both remembered and invoked or prayed to, *all* the year round. We need His help and guidance each and every day. The Apostle to the Gentiles reminds us in II Corinthians 4:16: "Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." Old age, incapacity, or sickness need not hinder us. Rather, they give more opportunities for our growing in His day-by-day grace and love through prayer to Him and in Him. Yearly in Advent—which means "coming"—we may imagine His presiding over Jesus' birth on the first Christmas Day. We look forward to His overshadowing the Blessed Virgin Mary at the An-

nunciation (March 25th) when the Son of God took flesh of her through this same Holy Ghost. During the Great Forty Days of Eastertide between our Lord's Resurrection and the last of His Resurrection appearances on Ascension Day or Holy Thursday, Christ told His close followers about the Gift from the Father He would send to them. As we study the Book of Common Prayer, and follow its Sundays and holy days, we see our Lord after His rising again preparing His disciples—that is, "learners"—for the coming of the Comforter through His Church. Saint John tells us about it in the Holy Gospel—"good news"—for the Fourth Sunday after Easter. On Rogation ("asking") or the Fifth Sunday after Easter, His inspiration and guiding are referred to particularly in the Collect or special prayer for the day. Literally He is to be "breathed into" us—to fill us with the Breath of God. "Breathe on me, Breath of God." Notice Him and the numerous references to Him in various places throughout the Prayer Book. Study and go through it sometime with this in view. He will become more and more real to you.

He is, too, the Spirit of Unity—uniting us to God, His Church, and one another. He binds us most closely. A lovely little prayer said daily by



many Associates of the Order of the Holy Cross contains these words. Jesus is asked to come to us: "in the holiness of Thy Spirit, and rule over every hostile power in the might of Thy Spirit." United to Him, no foe may win the victory of evil over us. He dwells within us from the moment of our Baptism, unless we have wilfully driven Him out. Father Hughson of our Order once wrote: "A perusal of First Corinthians six shows that according to Saint Paul, the one circumstance that made the sin of the Corinthians so heinous was that while sinning, they were by Baptism 'members of Christ' and 'the temples of the Holy Ghost.'" That is still true for most of those who read this paper. May God the Holy Ghost help you to stay close to Jesus. He will help you, for He is the only true representative or vicar of the Father and His only Son our Lord, making us one with Them in the fellowship of His Church. "This communion and fellowship" we are to share with all the saints, and it is the Spirit of God Who makes this possible and real.

The Holy Spirit also bears witness with our spirit, that in His love we may stand up for God and the things of God. Because Jesus has given us of His very own Spirit Whom He promised to send down from the Father (John 14:26), each soul

under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit is led by Jesus along the Godward way. By His Holy Spirit "the love of God is spread abroad in our hearts." (Romans 5:5.) By Him we are to influence others and attract them to God. He is, you see, no vague Divine force, as far too many Church people believe. Rather He is the power and presence of God actively working in and through us.

### III.

**P**ICTURE to yourself, from volume two of Saint Luke's works, the "Acts of the Apostles," the Upper Room on the morning of Pentecost. Acts 2:1 says: "And when the day of Pentecost was now come (in the Greek original, "was being fulfilled"), they were all together in one place." The Apostles, disciples, and holy women—120 of them—gathered for prayer and spiritual companionship on that day in Jerusalem. Then the Fire of God, the Holy Ghost, came into them! They were no longer afraid of their fellow-Jews who had crucified their Lord and Master. They rushed out with utmost boldness and preached Jesus. What a tremendous, life-changing event this proved to be. Union with Him through His Church was twofold: repentance or sorrow for sin, and Holy Baptism. Their task—and ours—was and is to go out and

preach *repentance*, penitence. Let us think of the work of the Holy Ghost in penitence—a *reality*, not just a pious expression, in our lives. In doing this I want to ask three questions and then give suggested outline answers.

First, WHO is the Holy Ghost? I remind you once more that He is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. (Refer to paragraph one at the beginning.) For a simple definition of Him, put it this way: He is God personal and active in you and me today. Also, He is "Ghost" or "Spirit." "Ghost" is simply an old Anglo-Saxon word for "spirit"; and "spirit," from the Latin "spiritus" stands for "breath." If you're breathing you are still living. Many are healthily alive, but their souls are gasping for breath. If you have difficulty with your breathing you naturally realize that something is wrong with your health. The same truth carries over into the life of the soul within you. You need to draw in, regularly and steadily, the "Breath of God," so that you may think, speak, and act "at all times and in all places" to the praise—not the dishonoring—of God. We know that, in the Holy Trinity, God the Father has no body. God the Son became "incarnate"—took human flesh—in the Person of Jesus. And the Holy Ghost is the very "breath" or "life" of God Himself.

There are several symbols or signs of Him: Temple (I Cor. 6:19) wherein He dwells, the temple of our bodies; Water (John 3:5), the baptismal waters and the cleansing He gives; Fire (Acts 2:3) as we thought about in connection with Pentecost; Finger (Luke 11:20) pointing us Godward, directing us onward and upward; Unction (I John 2:20) the oil of blessing and making holy; and Dove (Matthew 3:16.)

Then, most important perhaps, He is the HOLY Spirit. His work is to develop holiness in us. Harriet Auber's hymn puts it so well: "every thought of holiness is His alone." (The 1940 Hymnal of the Episcopal Church, number 368.) Every single time you think a good and holy thought, He is responsible for it. Each occasion upon which you say a right and helpful word, He is speaking to and through you. One by one, as your actions are worthy of a boy or man, girl or woman who is truly Christ's, the Spirit is at work and causes you to do brave and fine deeds.

Second, WHAT is His work of Penitence? Here is something which ought to strike home to anyone attempting to live a real Christian life. Penitence—repentance—means the condition of sorrow for sin. True sorrow is "contrition"—not "attrition" or being sorry because one has made a fool



of oneself, which is a form of pride. We aren't to be sorry because we've been caught and someone else we think more guilty has escaped. We aren't to be sorry just because *we* "stuck our neck out" as the saying goes. No, sorrow for sin can only be obtained by prayer for the gift of the Holy Ghost to show us our sins. There is desperate need of it. War in our hearts—against God, neighbors, and within ourselves—breeds wars on a titanic scale. That "pull"—towards or away from God's way—inside us, is where the battleground between God and Satan lies. The Holy Spirit is God making us sorry, working constantly, quietly, persistently. How richly meaningful is the plea of the supreme Psalm of penitence (51:10,11): "Create in me (for me) a clean heart, O God; And renew a right (steadfast) spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; And take not thy holy Spirit from me." The old psalmist, those centuries ago, knew well what he was talking about. The Holy Spirit is my Lord. (See Romans 1:1.) Am I eager to hear His slightest whisper? Again, from Miss Auber's hymn: "And His that gentle voice we hear, Soft as the breath of even, That checks each fault, that calms each fear, And speaks of heaven."

But it is work, activity, *energy* He brings, causing us to DO something about our sins. Then we

will know what real living is: free from any barriers between God, others, and in ourselves. II Esdras 14:22: "But if I have found favor before Thee, send the Holy Spirit into me, and I shall write all that hath been done in the world since the beginning, even the things that were written in thy law, that men may be able to find the path, and that they which would live in the latter days may live." This isn't nearly as exaggerated as it sounds at first. If we are really going to *live*, we must "breathe in" the Spirit of the living and loving God.

Third, WHEN should we share in the Holy Spirit's work of Penitence? Daily. One method is through our "meditation" or mental prayer, that time set apart by many, many Christians for intimate fellowship with God. This may be thought of as the daily renewal of Pentecost, when in our "upper room" of withdrawal He comes to enlighten and inflame us. Whenever you droop with weariness or inattention, recall that the Holy Ghost helping our infirmities is almighty, and that in His gentle strength we may start afresh. We may also share with God the Holy Spirit in His working of penitence in our hearts by making brief "acts" or prayers of contrition. When you do so, be simple, real—offering Him "ejaculatory" or "arrow"



prayers of sorrow and love. Even the slightest sin may be offered up, as soon as we recollect ourselves. Tell your Heavenly Father you are sorry. He knows it, of course. Yet He wants you to be well aware of it, and tell Him in a childlike, humble way. Take, say, ten minutes a day as a starter for meditating and making such self-offerings of sorrow and love. You will gradually come to value beyond price this daily companying with the Spirit of your God.

There may be added now an idea strange to some, yet of helpfulness and significance. "Reparation" means to "repair" the honor of Almighty God constantly dishonored by the innumerable sins of His children. This involves prayers, disciplines, devotional acts, not only for our own sins but for those of others. Throughout Christendom altars of reparation to the Holy Spirit might well be erected because of the widespread neglect of Him, as we realized. An authority on the doctrine (teaching) and Person of the Holy Ghost expresses it clearly: "Look around you and tell me whether the world is governed by the Spirit of God who created it, or by the spirit of Satan, the world's idol and destroyer? We must make *Reparation* for all those who, though baptized by water and the Holy Ghost, have nevertheless sinned against Him. Yet

we remain all the time indolent and inactive. The Holy Spirit is betrayed every hour of the day. Are there none willing to make Reparation? By doing this, you will grow in giving credit to Him in the life of the Church and of your own, as He leads you to penitential sorrow for whatever separates you from your God. Be thankful for all His gracious gifts—above everything, for Himself as God. He will lead you, perhaps, to your first Confession; or back to the Sacrament of Penance if you have neglected it over the years. Your only interest in sins is in getting rid of them, as a Seminary professor once told his students. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you your sins, and give you the bravery and courage to make a clean breast of them, that His gifts may dwell in you to the full. Increasing thousands of Episcopalians are learning this year by year, and the joy which it brings, by the loving strength of the Holy Spirit, is deeper than many have ever experienced before.

#### IV.

**F**OR we need to remember this. We are living in the "dispensation" or special ordering of the Holy Ghost ever since He came on Pentecost. By His power we are to become powerful. In His Presence we are to live and work. Further, let us never

forget—at a time of atomic and far lesser fears—the Spirit's Confirmation gift of Holy Fear. You should remember His manifold gifts—seven of them—and this is one of the greatest. Fear only to offend Him or be separated from Him. You have nothing whatsoever to fear if you are in conscious contact with God, and by His Spirit see to it that no barrier exists between you. Unholy fears are the absolute opposite of Holy Fear, which is that adoration, awe, reverence for the glorious God marking the earnest Christian and Churchman. Ecclesiasticus 40:26, even from those far-off days when it was written, brings us a healthy reminder: "Riches and strength will lift up the heart; and the fear of the Lord is above both: There is nothing wanting in the fear of the Lord, And there is no need to seek help therein." Resolve to pray to the Holy Spirit often and sincerely. He is God.

When I mentioned to a friend recently that I was writing about the Holy Spirit, including stress upon praying to Him, she said: "Please tell those who read, NOT to pray the 'Veni Creator' and NOT to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance, unless they positively are willing to take the consequences." That's utterly right. We must yield *ourselves* to Him and accept His leading in our lives,

although we may not always like the kind of answers He gives! In the end we shall probably learn to thank Him that He is not content for us to reach any easy achievements but rather truly challenging ones. His way is "straight and narrow" where we want to "beat about the bush" because we are timid and fearful of committing ourselves to His leading.

A Bishop of the Welsh Church best sums up our conclusions: "To the action of the Holy Spirit within the individual heart is due every good desire, every resistance to temptation, and every good work. Not only is it He Who illuminates the mind, it is also He Who warms the heart with love. Man is only truly alive when he is putting into action powers that find their expression in love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. For these are the fruit of the Spirit Who is the Giver of Life. To dwell on the high doctrine of the Holy Ghost as taught by the Catholic Church is to arouse within ourselves the longing for a more abundant spiritual life."

Sunday by Sunday we proclaim in the Nicene Creed: "And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; Who with the Father and the



Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spake by the prophets." We are to have genuine faith and trust in Him. We are to hold on to Him as Lord. He gave us the Christian life at our Baptism and we need to keep it clean. He proceeds from both the Father and the Son in the Holy Trinity. He, with Them, is owed our worship, our giving of glory to Him as God. He spoke in the times before Christ through the courageous prophets. He has spoken ever since through the saints. He wants to speak to you. Will you listen? And when you have heard His "still small voice" within your inmost being, you too can speak and act for God Himself.

He is Life-Giver! Remind yourself over and over again of these great truths. Thus you'll never forget: "Also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter."

The only prayers addressed directly to the Holy Spirit in the American Church's "Book of Common Prayer" are:

I.

On pages 543, 544, and 556.

*Veni, Creator Spiritus.*

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,  
*And lighten with celestial fire.*  
Thou the anointing Spirit art,  
*Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.*

Thy blessed unction from above,  
*Is comfort, life, and fire of love.*  
Enable with perpetual light  
*The dulness of our blinded sight.*

Anoint and cheer our soiled face  
*With the abundance of thy grace.*  
Keep far our foes, give peace at home;  
*Where thou art guide, no ill can come.*

Teach us to know the Father, Son,  
And thee, of both, to be but One;  
That, through the ages all along,  
This may be our endless song:  
Praise to thy eternal merit,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## II.

On page 572.

O God, Holy Ghost, Sanctifier of the faithful, visit, we pray thee, this Congregation with thy love and favour; enlighten their minds more and more with the light of the everlasting Gospel; graft in their hearts a love of the truth; increase in them true religion; nourish them with all goodness; and of thy great mercy keep them in the same, O blessed Spirit, whom, with the Father and the Son together, we worship and glorify as one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Some books on the subject of the Holy Ghost. The Barry, Bull, and Gore volumes are out of print, but search for them in a second-hand bookstore or try to borrow them.

1. Joseph Barry: *Meditations on the Office and Work of the Holy Spirit*. Edwin Gorham, New York City.
2. Paul Bull: *The Spirit of Wisdom, Love, and Power*. Macmillan Co., New York City.
3. F. W. Dillistone: *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Today*. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia.
4. Charles Gore: *The Holy Spirit and the Church*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York City.
5. Peter Green: *The Holy Ghost: The Comforter*. Longmans, Green, and Co., New York City.
6. Frank H. Hallock: *The Gifts of the Holy Ghost*. Morehouse-Gorham Co., New York City.
7. C. E. Lambert: *Life in the Spirit*. S. P. C. K., London.
8. R. G. Parsons: *Belief in the Holy Spirit*. S. P. C. K., London.
9. Bonnell Spencer: *The Sin against the Holy Ghost*. Holy Cross Press, West Park, New York.